

FORM PTO-1390 (REV. 9-2001)		U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE	ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER 1432
TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US) CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371			U.S. APPLICATION NO. (If known, see 37 CFR 1.5) 09/980980
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/SE00/00853	INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE 3 May 2000 (03.05.00)	PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED 6 May 1999 (06.05.99)	
TITLE OF INVENTION METHOD FOR DISTRIBUTING MAIL			
APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US Annika JOSEFSSON			
Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information:			
<p>1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This is a FIRST submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.</p> <p>2. <input type="checkbox"/> This is a SECOND or SUBSEQUENT submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.</p> <p>3. <input type="checkbox"/> This is an express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)). The submission must include items (5), (6), (9) and (21) indicated below.</p> <p>4. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The US has been elected by the expiration of 19 months from the priority date (Article 31).</p> <p>5. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2))</p> <p>a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> is attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau).</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> has been communicated by the International Bureau.</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/> is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US).</p> <p>6. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An English language translation of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)).</p> <p>a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> is attached hereto.</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> has been previously submitted under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).</p> <p>7. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3))</p> <p>a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau).</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> have been communicated by the International Bureau.</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/> have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired.</p> <p>d. <input type="checkbox"/> have not been made and will not be made.</p> <p>8. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An English language translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(3)).</p> <p>9. <input type="checkbox"/> An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(4)).</p> <p>10. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An English language translation of the annexes of the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(5)).</p> <p>Items 11 to 20 below concern document(s) or information included:</p> <p>11. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.</p> <p>12. <input type="checkbox"/> An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.</p> <p>13. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A FIRST preliminary amendment.</p> <p>14. <input type="checkbox"/> A SECOND or SUBSEQUENT preliminary amendment.</p> <p>15. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A substitute specification.</p> <p>16. <input type="checkbox"/> A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.</p> <p>17. <input type="checkbox"/> A computer-readable form of the sequence listing in accordance with PCT Rule 13ter.2 and 35 U.S.C. 1.821 - 1.825.</p> <p>18. <input type="checkbox"/> A second copy of the published international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).</p> <p>19. <input type="checkbox"/> A second copy of the English language translation of the international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).</p> <p>20. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other items or information: International Search Report International Preliminary Search Report Initial Information Data Sheet Receipt Postcard</p>			
Express Mail Label No. ET791783556US			

U.S. APPLICATION NO. (if known, see 37 CFR 1.5) 09/980980		INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/SE00/00853		ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER 1432	
21. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The following fees are submitted: BASIC NATIONAL FEE (37 CFR 1.492 (a) (1) - (5)): Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO \$1040.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but International Search Report prepared by the EPO or JPO \$890.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO \$740.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO but all claims did not satisfy provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) \$710.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) \$100.00 ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT =				CALCULATIONS PTO USE ONLY	
Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(e)).				\$ 1040	
CLAIMS	NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA	RATE	\$	
Total claims	4 - 20 =	0	x \$18.00	\$ 0	
Independent claims	1 - 3 =	0	x \$84.00	\$ 0	
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM(S) (if applicable)				+ \$280.00	
TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS =				\$ 1040	
<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant claims small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27. The fees indicated above are reduced by 1/2.				+	
SUBTOTAL =				\$ 1040	
Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(f)).				\$	
TOTAL NATIONAL FEE =				\$ 1040	
Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31). \$40.00 per property +				\$	
TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED =				\$ 1040	
				Amount to be refunded:	\$
				charged:	\$
a. <input type="checkbox"/> A check in the amount of \$ _____ to cover the above fees is enclosed. b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please charge my Deposit Account No. <u>501300</u> in the amount of \$ <u>1040.00</u> to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed. c. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. <u>501300</u> . A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed. d. <input type="checkbox"/> Fees are to be charged to a credit card. WARNING: Information on this form may become public. Credit card information should not be included on this form. Provide credit card information and authorization on PTO-2038.					
NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137 (a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status.					
SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> Alfred J. Mangels 4729 Cornell Road Cincinnati, Ohio 45241-2433 </div> <div style="width: 45%; text-align: right;"> SIGNATURE _____ Alfred J. Mangels NAME _____ 22,605 REGISTRATION NUMBER </div> </div>					

**PATENT COOPERATION TREATY
IN THE UNITED STATES ELECTED OFFICE (EO/US)**

In re application of:]	
]	
Annika JOSEFSSON]	
]	
Int'l. Appl'n. No.: PCT/SE00/00853]	
]	PCT DO/EO Section
Int'l. Filing Date: 3 May 2000]	
]	
Priority Date: 6 May 1999]	
]	
For: METHOD FOR DISTRIBUTING MAIL]	

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Dear Sir:

Prior to examination, and before the calculation of the national filing fee, please amend the above-identified international application as follows:

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Kindly enter the substitute specification attached hereto as Attachment A. The substitute specification includes no new matter. Also enclosed, as Attachment B, is a copy of the substitute specification showing all the changes, including the matter being added to and the matter being deleted from the specification that forms part of the published international application upon which the present application is based (PCT/SE00/00853, publication No. WO 00/68801).

IN THE CLAIMS:

The rewritten claims in this application are as follows:

1. (Amended) A method of sending mail by means of electronic mail, wherein a sender supplies to a mailing receiver mailing information including addressees and mail contents for distribution of mail to the addressees, said method comprising the steps of: entering the mailing information into a computer system having a database that contains electronic mail addresses of addressees; transmitting the mail contents by electronic mail to addressees who have an electronic mail address and who have consented to receive electronic mail from the sender; sorting out for delivery as physical mail that mail intended for addressees who have not consented to receive electronic mail from the sender; and upon expiration of a predetermined time period from when electronic mail was sent sorting out addressees who have not responded to the electronic mail and sending them the mail contents by physical mail.

2. (Amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the database includes physical addresses of the addressees.

3. (Amended) A method according to Claim 1, including the step of transmitting to the mailing information receiver information relating to those addressees who have answered their electronic mail.

Kindly add the following new claim:

--4. A method according to claim 3, including the step of sending the mail contents by

physical mail to those addressees who have not responded within a predetermined time to the mail contents that were dispatched to them by electronic mail.--

REMARKS

The specification changes reflected in the enclosed substitute specification (Attachment A) include the addition of the preferred subheadings at appropriate places within the specification, and they also include minor corrections. None of the changes made in the substitute specification introduces new matter because each change is based upon the international application in the form in which it was published. Attachment B shows the changes that were made in the substitute specification to the specification that was published by the International Bureau.

The claims as above amended present the claimed subject matter in the U.S. claim form to more particularly point out and more distinctly claim the subject matter that the applicant regards as his invention. The new claim further recites the subject matter that the applicant believes to be her invention.

Attached hereto as Attachment C is a set of the claims as they were allowed in the international application, showing all additions, deletions, and modifications of those claims that are reflected in the clean claims presented above.

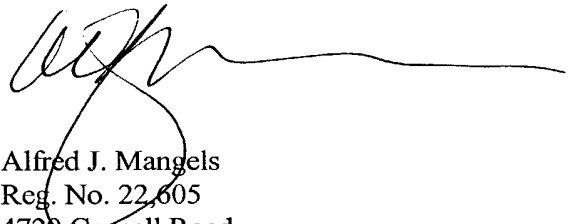
Also attached hereto is an Abstract of the Disclosure presented on a separate sheet in conformity with the rules of practice.

Based upon the specification and claim amendments to this national phase application, it is believed that the specification conforms with U.S. formal requirements. Additionally, the amended claims as hereinabove presented conform in substance with the corresponding claims that were examined in the international application. And based upon the

acceptance by the International Preliminary Examining Authority of the invention as it was claimed in the amended claims as they were presented in the international application as meeting each of the novelty, the inventive step, and the industrial applicability criteria set forth in the Patent Cooperation Treaty, the claims in the present application are believed to conform with both U.S. formal and substantive requirements, and they are therefore believed to be in allowable form. Accordingly, an early Notice of Allowance is in order and is respectfully solicited.

Should the examiner have any question after considering this Preliminary Amendment, he is cordially invited to telephone the undersigned attorney so that any such question can be quickly resolved, and in order that the present application can proceed toward allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



Alfred J. Mangels
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4729 Cornell Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45241
Telephone: (513) 469-0470

November 5, 2001

ATTACHMENT A

SUBSTITUTE SPECIFICATION

(Including All Changes From Published International Application No.
PCT/SE00/00853)

METHOD FOR DISTRIBUTING MAIL

Background of the Invention

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to a method of sending mail, and more particularly to a method of sending mail electronically.

Description of the Related Art

[0002] It has become more usual to send mail to an addressee electronically. It would be particularly beneficial if bills and other printed matter were to be mailed by electronic mail. In this regard, a sender could deliver information concerning addresses and mail contents on data media to Posten Sverige AB (Swedish Post Office Department) , which could then send the mail to respective addressees on the basis of its knowledge of their e-mail addresses.

[0003] One problem in this regard is whether or not the e-mail addresses of the addressees are known and whether or not the addressees wish to receive electronic mail.

[0004] Another important problem that arises when wishing to send bills or invoices, for instance to private individuals, via e-mail is that there is no way to check whether the addressee reads his/her e-mail regularly, makes payments by means of his/her personal computer, prints out bills or invoices when necessary, etc., as

distinct from a physical letter sent by standard mail. It is assumed that a letter will be delivered to the addressee and that the addressee will open and read his/her mail.

[0005] These problems are solved by means of the present invention, which relates to a method of greatly facilitating the use of e-mail for sending mail of the kind which the addressee can be expected to answer.

Summary of the Invention

[0006] The present invention thus relates to a method of sending mail by electronic mail. A sender delivers information relating to the volume of mail to be sent, such as the addressees and contents of the mail, on data media to a receiver which is to send the mail to the addressees. The contents of said data media are fed into a computer system in which the addressees are compared with a register that includes information that discloses whether or not respective addressees have an electronic mail address. The computer system sends respective dispatches by electronic mail to addressees that have an electronic mail address, and it sorts out remaining addressees to whom mail is to be sent as physical mail. Subsequent to the passage of a predetermined period of time from the time at which electronic mail was sent but has still not been answered, the computer system sorts out such addressees and sends them a corresponding dispatch by physical mail.

Brief Description of the Drawing

[0007] The invention will now be described in more detail partly with reference

to an exemplifying embodiment of the invention shown on the accompanying drawing, in which

[0008] -Figure 1 is a simple block diagram which illustrates a mailing method in accordance with the present invention.

Description of the Preferred Embodiments

[0009] The present invention relates to a method of sending dispatches by electronic mail. By electronic mail is meant so-called e-mail that is sent over the Internet or over some corresponding network. Different appropriate authorization codes may be included.

[0010] A sender 1 delivers information concerning the volume of mail to be sent, such as addressees and content, on data media to a receiver 2 that functions to send the mail to the addressees 3.

[0011] The sender may be a company that wishes to send bills or invoices to its customers, who then become the addressees. Naturally, the volume of mail may, instead, comprise different tenders, order confirmations, different types of document, such as partially completed declaration forms, etc. However, the invention is primarily useful to companies that wish to send an item of mail to a large number of addressees.

[0012] The invention is exemplified below with reference to a gasoline company [who] that wishes to bill companies and private individuals for the purchase of gasoline at filling stations by means of a credit card. It will be understood, however, that the invention is not limited to this area of use.

[0013] The gasoline company makes out at regular time intervals a number of bills that are to be sent to credit card owners for payment.

[0014] The sender 1, i.e., the gasoline company, sends information concerning the volume of mail, i.e., the bills to be sent, such as addressees and the contents of respective bills, on data media to the receiver 2 that is to send the mail to the addressees 3. The receiver may suitably be Posten Sverige AB.

[0015] According to the invention, the contents of said data media are entered into a computer system 4 belonging to the receiver. The addressees are compared with a register in the database 5 of the computer system that contains information as to whether respective addressees have an e-mail address. The database may also include information as to whether or not an addressee wishes to receive certain mail as e-mail and certain other mail as physical mail.

[0016] The computer system 4 is then caused to send the mail concerned by e-mail to those addressees that have an e-mail address. For instance, the e-mail is sent to the personal computer 8 of the addressee 3 via the Internet. The computer system 4 is also caused to sort out remaining addressees to whom the mail is to be sent as physical mail 6, this mail then passes through standard mail routines.

[0017] When physical mail is to be sent, the computer system 4 is caused to print out the dispatches by means of a printer 7.

[0018] According to the invention, when a predetermined period of time has passed from the time at which unanswered e-mail was first sent, the computer system 4 is caused to sort out such addressees and to send the corresponding e-mailed information as physical mail.

[0019] The physical mail is suitably sent as a mail item whose content corresponds to the content of the mail item sent by electronic mail. Instead, a bill or invoice reminder can be sent by physical mail.

[0020] By the word answered is meant that the addressee has been in contact with the sender within a predetermined time with regard to the mail item concerned. In the case of a bill, this contact will normally mean that payment is made. The sender informs the receiver that contact has been made or has not been made, after said predetermined time period has expired.

[0021] This is effected by causing the computer system 4 to receive from the sender information concerning those addressees who have answered their mail.

[0022] A large majority of the credit card owners is reached by first sending the mail item by electronic mail. Some of these credit card owners pay their respective bills within the allotted time period, whereas others do not. Those credit card owners who have not said that they are willing to receive electronic mail, are sent their bills or invoices conventionally by physical mail. Some of this latter group will also pay in time, whereas others do not.

[0023] The predetermined time period that shall have passed from when unanswered electronic mail was sent may, of course, vary depending on the type of mail concerned. In the case of bills or invoices issued by a gasoline company, an appropriate time may be when the standard payment term expires. In this case, the addressees are sent by physical mail a reminder that includes a copy of the bill. Similarly, the same kind of reminder can be sent to those who have already received the first mail item by physical mail.

[0024] Consequently, many mail items, namely the electronic mail items, are less expensive and simpler to send, and a reminder referring to unanswered or unpaid items will be sent automatically together with reminders to those who have not received electronic mail.

[0025] According to one highly preferred embodiment of the invention, the computer system 4 includes a database 5 which includes physical addresses and e-mail addresses of addressees who have expressed a wish to receive electronic mail.

[0026] Consequently, the anticipated response frequency to electronic mail will be much higher than when electronic mail addresses have been obtained from different sources.

[0027] The problems mentioned in the introduction are solved by the present invention.

[0028] Although the invention has been described above with reference to exemplifying embodiments thereof, it will be understood that the person skilled in this art will be able to modify the invention to accommodate different types of mail items. For instance, physical mail can be sent to an addressee who wishes to receive e-mail, after said addressee has been sent a reminder by e-mail.

[0029] The invention is therefore not limited to the aforescribed embodiments thereof, since variations can be made within the scope of the accompanying claims.

What is claimed is:

JC13 Rec'd PCT/PTO 05 NOV 2001

ATTACHMENT B**SUBSTITUTE SPECIFICATION**

(Showing All Changes From Published International Application No.
PCT/SE00/00853)

METHOD FOR DISTRIBUTING MAIL**Background of the Invention****Field of the Invention**

[0001] The present invention relates to a method of sending mail, and more particularly to a method of sending mail electronically.

Description of the Related Art

[0002] It has become more usual to send mail to an addressee electronically. It would be particularly beneficial if bills and other printed matter were to be mailed by electronic mail. In this regard, a sender could deliver information concerning addresses and mail contents on data media to Posten Sverige AB (Swedish Post Office Department), which could then send the mail to respective addressees on the basis of its knowledge of their e-mail addresses.

[0003] One problem in this regard is whether or not the e-mail addresses of the addressees are known and whether or not the addressees wish to receive electronic mail.

[0004] Another important problem that arises when wishing to send bills or invoices, for instance to private individuals, via e-mail is that there is no way to check whether the addressee reads his/her e-mail regularly, makes payments by means of his/her personal computer, prints out bills or invoices when necessary, etc., as

distinct from a physical letter sent by standard mail. It is assumed that a letter will be delivered to the addressee and that the addressee will open and read his/her mail.

[0005] These problems are solved by means of the present invention, which relates to a method of greatly facilitating the use of e-mail for sending mail of the kind which the addressee can be expected to answer.

Summary of the Invention

[0006] The present invention thus relates to a method of sending mail by electronic mail [where a] . A sender delivers information relating to the volume of mail to be sent, such as the addressees and contents of the mail, on data media to a receiver which [shall] is to send the mail to the addressees [, and is characterised by feeding the] . The contents of said data media are fed into a computer system in which the addressees are compared with a register that includes information that discloses whether or not respective addressees have an electronic mail address [; causing the] . The computer system [to send] sends respective dispatches by electronic mail to addressees that have an electronic mail address [; causing the computer system to sort] , and it sorts out remaining addressees to [which] whom mail [shall] is to be sent as physical mail [; and subsequent] . Subsequent to the passage of a predetermined period of time from the time at which electronic mail was sent but has still not been answered, [causing] the computer system [to sort] sorts out such addressees and [to send thereto] sends them a corresponding dispatch by physical mail.

Brief Description of the Drawing

[0007] The invention will now be described in more detail partly with reference to an exemplifying embodiment of the invention shown on the accompanying drawing, in which

[0008] -Figure 1 is a simple block diagram which [is intended to illustrate] illustrates a mailing method in accordance with the present invention.

Description of the Preferred Embodiments

[0009] The present invention relates to a method of sending dispatches by electronic mail. By electronic mail is meant [so called] so-called e-mail that is sent over the Internet or over some corresponding network. Different appropriate [authorisation] authorization codes may be included.

[0010] A sender 1 delivers information concerning the volume of mail to be sent, such as addressees and content, on data media to a receiver 2 that functions to send the mail to the addressees 3.

[0011] The sender may be a company [who] that wishes to send bills or invoices to its customers, who then become the addressees. Naturally, the volume of mail may, instead, comprise different tenders, order confirmations, different types of document, such as partially completed declaration forms, etc. However, the invention is primarily useful to companies that wish to send an item of mail to a large number of addressees.

[0012] The invention is exemplified below with reference to a gasoline company [who] that wishes to bill companies and private individuals for the purchase

of gasoline at filling stations by means of a credit card. It will be understood, however, that the invention is not limited to this area of use.

[0013] The gasoline company makes out at regular time intervals a number of bills that are to be sent to credit card owners for payment.

[0014] The sender 1, i.e., the gasoline company, sends information concerning the volume of mail, i.e., the bills [,] to be sent, such as addressees and the contents of respective bills, on data media to the receiver 2 that [shall] is to send the mail to the addressees 3. The receiver may suitably be Posten Sverige AB.

[0015] According to the invention, the contents of said data media are entered into a computer system 4 belonging to the receiver. The addressees are compared with a register in the database 5 of the computer system that contains information as to whether respective addressees have an e-mail address [or not]. The database may also include information as to whether or not an addressee wishes to receive certain mail as e-mail and certain other mail as physical mail.

[0016] The computer system 4 is then caused to send the mail [concerned] concerned by e-mail to those addressees that have an e-mail address. For instance, the e-mail is sent to the personal computer 8 of the addressee 3 via the Internet. The computer system 4 is also caused to sort out remaining addressees to [which] whom the mail [shall] is to be sent as physical mail 6, this mail then [passing] passes through standard mail routines.

[0017] When physical mail is to be sent, the computer system 4 is caused to print out the dispatches by means of a printer 7.

[0018] According to the invention, when a predetermined period of time has passed from the time at which unanswered e-mail was first sent, the computer system 4 is caused to sort out such addressees and to send the corresponding [e-mail] e-mailed information as physical mail.

[0019] The physical mail is suitably sent as a mail item whose content corresponds to the content of the mail item sent by electronic mail. Instead, a bill or invoice reminder can be sent by physical mail.

[0020] By the word answered is meant that the addressee has been in contact with the sender within a predetermined time with regard to the mail item concerned. In the case of a bill, this contact will normally mean that payment is made. The sender informs the receiver that contact has been made or has not been made, after said predetermined time period has expired.

[0021] This is effected by causing the computer system 4 to receive from the sender information concerning those addressees [that] who have answered their mail.

[0022] A large majority of the credit card owners is reached by first sending the mail item by electronic mail. Some of these credit card owners pay their respective bills within the allotted time period, whereas others do not. Those credit card owners who have not said that they are willing to receive electronic mail, are sent their bills or invoices conventionally by physical mail. Some of this latter group will also pay in time, whereas others do not.

[0023] The predetermined time period that shall have passed from when unanswered electronic mail was sent may, of course, vary depending on the type of

mail concerned. In the case of bills or invoices issued by a gasoline company, an appropriate time may be when the standard payment term expires. In this case, the addressees are sent by physical [post] mail a reminder that includes a copy of the bill. Similarly, the same kind of reminder can be sent to those who have already received the first mail item by physical [post] mail.

[0024] Consequently, many mail items, namely the electronic mail items, are less expensive and simpler to send, and a reminder referring to unanswered or unpaid items will be sent automatically together with reminders to those who have not received electronic mail.

[0025] According to one highly preferred embodiment of the invention, the computer system 4 includes a database 5 which includes physical addresses and e-mail addresses of addressees who have expressed a wish to receive electronic [post] mail.

[0026] Consequently, the anticipated response frequency to electronic mail will be much higher than when electronic mail addresses have been obtained from different sources.

[0027] The problems mentioned in the introduction are solved by the present invention.

[0028] Although the invention has been described above with reference to exemplifying embodiments thereof, it will be understood that the person skilled in this art will be able to modify the invention to accommodate different types of mail items. For instance, physical [post] mail can be sent to an addressee who wishes to receive e-mail, after said addressee has been sent a reminder by e-mail.

[0029] The invention is therefore not limited to the aforescribed embodiments thereof, since variations can be made within the scope of the accompanying [Claims] claims.

[CLAIMS]

What is claimed is:

METHOD FOR DISTRIBUTING MAIL

The present invention relates to a method of sending mail.

5 It has become more usual to send mail to an addressee electronically. It would be particularly beneficial if bills and other printed matter were to be mailed by electronic mail. In this regard, a sender could deliver information concerning addresses and mail contents on data media to
10 Posten Sverige AB (Swedish Post Office Department), which could then send the mail to respective addressees on the basis of its knowledge of their e-mail addresses.

One problem in this regard is whether or not the e-mail
15 addresses of the addressees are known and whether or not the addressees wish to receive electronic mail.

Another important problem that arises when wishing to send bills or invoices for instance to private individuals via e-
20 mail is that there is no way to check whether the addressee reads his/her e-mail regularly, makes payments by means of his/her personal computer, prints out bills or invoices when necessary, etc., as distinct from a physical letter sent by standard mail. It is assumed that a letter will be delivered
25 to the addressee and that the addressee will open and read his/her mail.

These problems are solved by means of the present invention, which relates to a method of greatly facilitating the use of
30 e-mail for sending mail of the kind which the addressee can be expected to answer.

The present invention thus relates to a method of sending mail by electronic mail where a sender delivers information relating to the volume of mail to be sent, such as the addressees and contents of the mail, on data media to a receiver which shall send the mail to the addressees, and is characterised by feeding the contents of said data media into a computer system in which the addressees are compared with a register that includes information that discloses whether or not respective addressees have an electronic mail address; causing the computer system to send respective dispatches by electronic mail to addressees that have an electronic mail address; causing the computer system to sort out remaining addressees to which mail shall be sent as physical mail; and subsequent to the passage of a predetermined period of time from the time at which electronic mail was sent but has still not been answered, causing the computer system to sort out such addressees and to send thereto a corresponding dispatch by physical mail.

The invention will now be described in more detail partly with reference to an exemplifying embodiment of the invention shown on the accompanying drawing, in which

- Figure 1 is a simple block diagram which is intended to illustrate the invention.

The present invention relates to a method of sending dispatches by electronic mail. By electronic mail is meant so called e-mail that is sent over the Internet or over some corresponding network. Different appropriate authorisation codes may be included.

A sender 1 delivers information concerning the volume of mail to be sent, such as addressees and content, on data media to a receiver 2 that functions to send the mail to the addressees 3.

5

The sender may be a company who wishes to send bills or invoices to its customers, who then become the addressees. Naturally, the volume of mail may, instead, comprise different tenders, order confirmations, different types of document, such as partially completed declaration forms, etc. However, the invention is primarily useful to companies that wish to send an item of mail to a large number of addressees.

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The invention is exemplified below with reference to a gasoline company who wishes to bill companies and private individuals for the purchase of gasoline at filling stations by means of a credit card. It will be understood, however, that the invention is not limited to this area of use.

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The gasoline company makes out at regular time intervals a number of bills that are to be sent to credit card owners for payment.

The sender 1, i.e. the gasoline company, sends information concerning the volume of mail, i.e. the bills, to be sent, such as addressees and the contents of respective bills, on data media to the receiver 2 that shall send the mail to the addressees 3. The receiver may suitably be Posten Sverige AB.

30

According to the invention, the contents of said data media are entered into a computer system 4 belonging to the

receiver. The addressees are compared with a register in the database 5 of the computer system that contains information as to whether respective addressees have an e-mail address or not. The database may also include information as to whether or not an addressee wishes to receive certain mail as e-mail and certain other mail as physical mail.

The computer system 4 is then caused to send the mail concerned by e-mail to those addressees that have an e-mail address. For instance, the e-mail is sent to the personal computer 8 of the addressee 3 via the Internet. The computer system 4 is also caused to sort out remaining addressees to which the mail shall be sent as physical mail 6, this mail then passing through standard mail routines.

When physical mail is to be sent, the computer system 4 is caused to print out the dispatches by means of a printer 7.

According to the invention, when a predetermined period of time has passed from the time at which unanswered e-mail was first sent, the computer system 4 is caused to sort out such addressees and to send the corresponding e-mail as physical mail 6.

The physical mail is suitably sent as a mail item whose content corresponds to the content of the mail item sent by electronic mail. Instead, a bill or invoice reminder can be sent by physical mail.

By the word answered is meant that the addressee has been in contact with the sender with regard to the mail item concerned. In the case of a bill, this contact will normally

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mean that payment is made. The sender informs the receiver that contact has been made or has not been made, after said predetermined time period has expired.

- 5 This is effected by causing the computer system 4 to receive from the sender information concerning those addressees that have answered their mail.

10 A large majority of the credit card owners is reached by first sending the mail item by electronic mail. Some of these credit card owners pay their respective bills within the allotted time period, whereas others do not. Those credit card owners who have not said that they are willing to receive electronic mail, are sent their bills or invoices
15 conventionally by physical mail. Some of this latter group will also pay in time, whereas others do not.

The predetermined time period that shall have passed from when unanswered electronic mail was sent may, of course, vary
20 depending on the type of mail concerned. In the case of bills or invoices issued by a gasoline company, an appropriate time may be when the standard payment term expires. In this case, the addressees are sent by physical post a reminder that includes a copy of the bill. Similarly, the same kind of
25 reminder can be sent to those who have already received the first mail item by physical post.

Consequently, many mail items, namely the electronic mail items, are less expensive and simpler to send, and a reminder
30 referring to unanswered or unpaid items will be sent automatically together with reminders to those who have not received electronic mail.

According to one highly preferred embodiment of the invention, the computer system 4 includes a database 5 which includes physical addresses and e-mail addresses of addressees who have expressed a wish to receive electronic post.

Consequently, the anticipated response frequency to electronic mail will be much higher than when electronic mail addresses have been obtained from different sources.

The problems mentioned in the introduction are solved by the present invention.

Although the invention has been described above with reference to exemplifying embodiments thereof, it will be understood that the person skilled in this art will be able to modify the invention to accommodate different types of mail items. For instance, physical post can be sent to an addressee who wishes to receive e-mail, after said addressee has been sent a reminder by e-mail.

The invention is therefore not limited to the aforescribed embodiments thereof, since variations can be made within the scope of the accompanying Claims.

CLAIMS

1. A method of sending mail by means of electronic mail, wherein a sender (1) supplies information as to the mail volume to be sent, such as addressees (3) and mail contents, on data media to a receiver (2) who shall send the mail to the addressees, **characterised** by feeding the contents of said data media into a computer system (4), which computer system has a database (5), which is arranged to contain the electronic mail addresses of addressees who have expressed a wish to receive electronic mail causing the computer system (4) to send the mail items concerned by electronic mail to addressees that have an electronic mail address; causing the computer system (4) to sort out as physical mail (6) remaining addressees to which mail items shall be sent; and upon expiration of a predetermined time period from when unanswered electronic mail was sent causing the computer system (4) to sort out such addressees (3) for the purpose of sending a mail item by physical mail.

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2. A method according to Claim 1, **characterised** in that the database (5) is caused to contain physical addresses to the addressees.

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3. A method according to Claim 1 or 2, **characterised** by causing the computer system (4) to receive from the sender information relating to those addressees who have answered their mail.

Abstract of the Disclosure

A method of sending mail electronically. A sender supplies information to a receiver on data media relative to mail to be sent, such as addressees and mail contents. The contents of the data media are fed into the receiver's computer system, in which the addressees are compared with a register that includes information as to whether or not respective addressees have an electronic mail address. The computer system sends the mail items by electronic mail to addressees that have an electronic mail address, and it sorts out as physical mail the mail to the remaining addressees to whom mail items are to be sent. Upon expiration of a predetermined time, the computer system sorts out such addressees who have not answered the electronic mail, for the purpose of sending them the mail item by physical mail.

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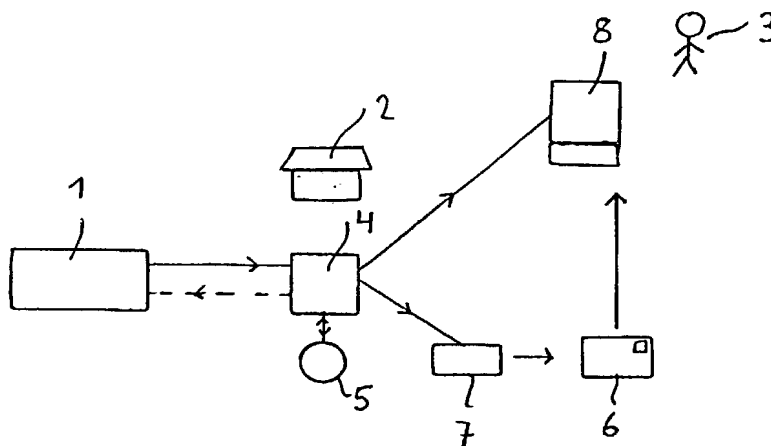
WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau



INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification ⁷ : G06F 12/60	A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/68801 (43) International Publication Date: 16 November 2000 (16.11.00)
<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/SE00/00853</p> <p>(22) International Filing Date: 3 May 2000 (03.05.00)</p> <p>(30) Priority Data: 9901644-6 6 May 1999 (06.05.99) SE</p> <p>(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): POSTEN AB [SE/SE]; S-105 00 Stockholm (SE).</p> <p>(72) Inventor; and (75) Inventor/Applicant (for US only): JOSEFSSON, Annika [SE/SE]; Söderberga Allé 15, S-162 51 Vällingby (SE).</p> <p>(74) Agents: ÖRTENBLAD, Bertil et al.; Noréns Patentbyrå AB, Box 10198, S-100 55 Stockholm (SE).</p>		<p>(81) Designated States: AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).</p> <p>Published With international search report. In English translation (filed in Swedish).</p>

(54) Title: METHOD FOR DISTRIBUTING MAIL



(57) Abstract

A method of sending mail by means of electronic mail, wherein a sender (1) supplies information as to the mail volume to be sent, such as addressees (3) and mail contents, on data media to a receiver (2) who shall send the mail to the addressees. The invention is characterized by feeding the contents of said data media into a computer system (4) in which the addressees (3) are compared with a register that includes information as to whether or not respective addressees (3) have an electronic mail address; causing the computer system (4) to send the mail items concerned by electronic mail to addressees that have an electronic mail address; causing the computer system (4) to sort out as physical mail (6) remaining addressees to which mail items shall be sent; and upon expiration of a predetermined time period from when unanswered electronic mail was sent causing the computer system (4) to sort out such addressees (3) for the purpose of sending a mail item by physical mail.

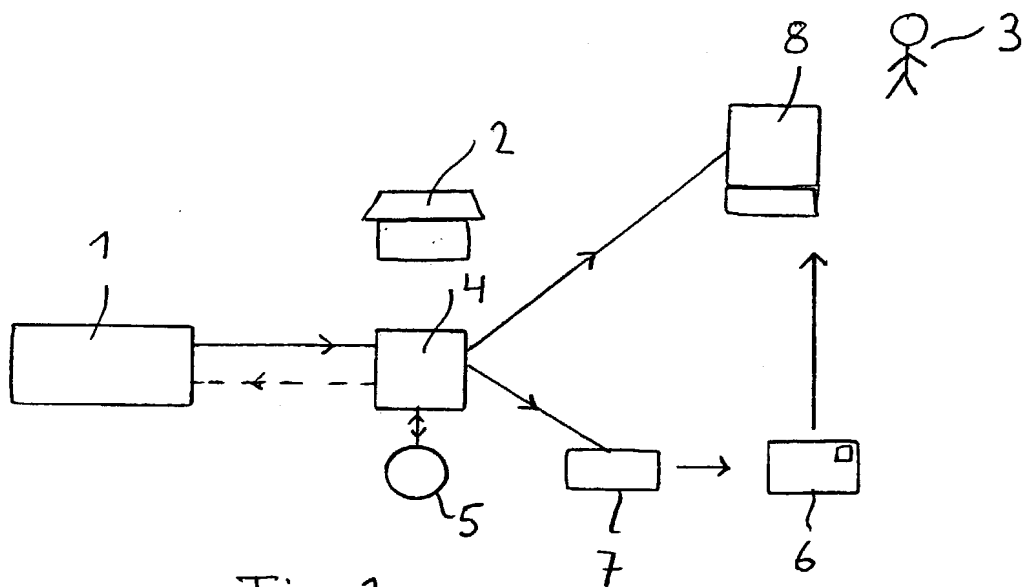


Fig 1

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NO.
1432

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:
My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name; and
I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

Method for distributing mail
the specification of which

(check)
one

☐ is attached hereto.

☒ was filed on May 3, 2000

as

Application Serial No. PCT/SE00/00853

and was amended on _____

(if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a), and Title 35 USC §102, as printed on the reverse of this Declaration and which I have read.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, §119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

Prior Foreign Application(s)

9901644-6

(Number)

Sweden

(Country)

6 May 1999

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

Priority Claimed

☒ Yes ☐ No

(Number)

(Country)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

☐ Yes ☐ No

(Number)

(Country)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

☐ Yes ☐ No

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status — patented, pending, abandoned)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status — patented, pending, abandoned)

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint

Alfred J. Mangels, Registration No. 22,605, my attorney with full power of substitution and revocation to prosecute this application, to receive correspondence from and transact all business in the Patent Office connected therewith. The correspondence address of the above attorney is:

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I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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Date

7-00